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UNCLAS YEREVAN 002007

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR DRL AND EUR/CACEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: AND THEN THERE WERE TWO...DWINDLING NUMBER OF WOMEN IN THE GOAM

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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DEPMIN'S DISMISSAL: FROM BAD TO WORSE  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) On November 8 the GOAM announced the removal of Lilit Asatryan as Deputy Minister of Culture and Youth Affairs, leaving only two women in deputy ministerial positions. Following Asatryan's removal, women fill only two of the 78 ministerial and deputy ministerial seats in the government. Although the GOAM is quick to cite its April 2004 National Action Plan on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing their Role in the Society, an Armenian woman has not filled a cabinet-level position for over two years. Women constitute a mere nine percent in the National Assembly (7 of 131). Only one of these MPs, Hranoush Hakobyan, was elected in a single-mandate district with its attendant considerable independent political clout. Critics, including local and international NGOs, argue convincingly that women played a greater role in national and local government during Armenia's unlamented Soviet era.

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GOAM SLOW TO TAKE MEASURES  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Jemma Hasratsyan, President of the Association of Women with a University Education, blames the current situation on the lack of a genuine government policy on women and the absence of proven mechanisms to ensure women's participation in the decision-making process. Eleanora Virabyan, a specialist from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (the state body in charge of the GOAM's action plan on women), told us that the Ministry was concerned about the low level of women's representation in the GOAM, particularly in light of the November 8 announcement. According to Virabyan, the Ministry had submitted a plan to the Prime Minister aimed at remedying the situation. One measure was a draft "Law on Ensuring the Creation of Equal Conditions for Men and Women" that would address the issue of impediments to women who seek to enter government service through appointments or elections.

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COMMENT  
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[1](#)4. (SBU) Despite the fact that high-profile Armenian women lead dozens of NGOs and international organizations and that women make-up the majority of the GOAM's civil service, the GOAM lags behind even Armenia's admittedly restrictive cultural norms regarding gender roles. The GOAM has an opportunity, however, to take a hard look at the implementation of its action plans affecting women in government, acknowledge the absence of women in high-level GOAM positions, and identify ways to genuinely encourage the full participation of all members of Armenian society in political life.

EVANS